

#### Description

As the next generation of leaders, young people must know and understand how policies and laws are made in their school organizations and communities, as well as at the state and national levels.

#### Objectives

- › Understand the leadership opportunities available in school and community
- › Connect with leadership mentors in the community
- › Explore state and local government opportunities
- › Understand the legislative process

**Total time suggested  
for all activities:** 2½ hours

#### Supplies Needed

- › Letters: local leaders panel invitation and legislative process speaker invitation
- › Sample Bill One and Sample Bill Two

#### Handouts - One for each student

- › Opportunities - Local, State and National
- › Attending a Board Meeting
- › Legislative Process Flowchart

#### Activities

- › Opportunities assessment - 30 minutes
- › Local leaders panel- 45 minutes
- › Exploration of local and state government, including mock assembly and optional field trip - one hour, with additional time needed for field trip

#### Facilitator Notes

Details for each activity can be found below.

#### Opportunities Assessment

Offering students a list of the opportunities available to them opens a door for community exploration and discussion.

Ask the students to brainstorm all of the extracurricular programs in the school. Write their responses on the blackboard, whiteboard or flip chart paper. Ask them to think further about opportunities that exist outside of the community or school building. In many cases, local organizations within the school have opportunities for students to advance beyond the local community through competitions or by running for a state or national office. (A sample list is provided).

Step back from the brainstormed list of opportunities and ask students involved to share experiences. Have additional information and resources on the opportunities your school offers because the goal is to engage these students in the school and community.

#### Local Leaders Panel

Engaging young people with leaders in your community can help develop their professional network and connect with people whose role they may have one day.

##### 1. Identify community leaders.

Identify and invite elected officials and community leaders to present on their leadership experiences. Suggestions include city commissioner, mayor, county commissioner, legislator, school board member, park board member, or city or county administrator. A sample invitation letter is included (local leaders panel invitation).

##### 2. Prepare the students.

Prepare students for the panel by giving them a brief overview of the type of individuals from whom they will be hearing. Encourage or require them to prepare additional questions for the panel before it begins.

##### 3. Engage in discussion.

On the day of the event, allow the panelists to introduce themselves and their positions (when applicable). Begin with panel members answering the questions they received in their invitation. Encourage students to ask their prepared questions or ask follow-up questions. Guide the discussion as needed.

### **Engage in a Mock Legislative Assembly**

This activity allows students to become the legislators and act on their ideas and beliefs.

#### 1. The Legislative Process

Consider inviting local legislators or a community member who has worked closely with the Legislature to facilitate the instruction and the activity. A sample letter of invitation is included.

A legislative process flowchart for the U.S. Congress is included; the framework of this process is comparable to the process used in all 50 states. Additional resources are found at <http://legis.nd.gov> and "I'm Just a Bill (Schoolhouse Rock)" at [www.youtube.com/watch?v=tYeJ55o3E10](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=tYeJ55o3E10).

Review the sample North Dakota Legislative bill with students.

#### 2. Students as Legislators

Students are the legislators in this activity. Consider appointing or electing students to serve in either chamber and allow them to debate current or past pieces of proposed legislation. For debate purposes, two sample bills have been included. Allow students to introduce the bill, assign it to a committee and carry their legislation through the process.

This activity can be conducted in the absence of community experts or legislators, but their presence increases the effectiveness of the activity and aids in the delivery of instruction.

**Optional:** If feasible, consider facilitating a visit to the state capitol during the legislative session. This is a great opportunity for your students to get a close-up look at government.

### **Government in Action - Field Trip**

Facilitating the observation of government in action is a great way to reinforce the introduction of state and local government structure, as well as encourage young people to explore their community and state.

#### 1. Identify local governance groups.

Identify local boards, councils, commission or other, opportunities for students to observe government close to home as these groups hold regular open meetings to conduct business. Possibilities include city commission, county commission, school board, job development authority, park board, library board and Chamber of Commerce. Contacting the chairperson to make arrangements for students to observe is helpful.

#### 2. Prepare the students.

Provide each student with the Board Meetings: What to Look for handout. Encourage the students to use this worksheet as a guide in identifying aspects of an effective meeting. This guide will serve as a resource to ensure that students are listening with a purpose.

#### 3. Follow-up

Require that students bring their worksheet to the next class and use their observations as the foundation for a meaningful discussion about the basics of effective communication, effective meetings and the business conducted at the meeting.